

South Dakota National Guard

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SD National Guard, Suriname military participate in Women in Leadership exchange

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. – Members of the South Dakota National Guard and Suriname Defense Force participated in a Women in Leadership exchange, March 3-5.

Four women from the Suriname military met with Soldiers and Airmen throughout eastern South Dakota to understand the support services and programs provided to SDNG members and the types of opportunities for females to serve.

The exchange was conducted as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program, which seeks to strengthen ties between partnering country's representatives, both culturally and professionally, through engagement on military topics and capabilities.

The Suriname delegation was hosted by members of the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and 139th Brigade Support Battalion and they visited several Army and Air Guard units.

"Last year I had an opportunity to be part of the Women in Leadership exchange in Suriname," said Maj. Rebecca Trygstad, administrative officer for the 139th BSB. "This gave me a better understanding of the Suriname Army and some of the opportunities females face within their ranks. Many of the topics we discussed during this visit were based off what we discussed last year, and some of the programs they wanted to get a better understanding of during our last exchange."

The exchange began with a tour of the Air National Guard base at Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls, where the Surinamers received a 114th Fighter Wing overview brief from Col. Nathan Alholinna, 114th FW commander. One of the first 114th female F-16 pilots, Capt. Shannon Davis, also talked about her experience in training and being a member of the SDANG.

The Suriname delegation also visited the Army Guard's Unit Training and Equipment Site to gain a better understanding of the maintenance level provided to units and their equipment.

They were also provided briefs on the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Family Readiness, Recruiting and Retention, Sexual Assault Response and Equal Employment Opportunity programs and what each program provides to Soldiers and Airmen.

"Each one of the presentations provided an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the Suriname military and how their make-up relates to ours," said Trygstad.

The Suriname women later visited the 196th MEB, 139th BSB and 235th Military Police Company and received an overview of each unit's structure and was able to see some the equipment they use to train Soldiers.

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“Female Soldiers from each one of these units talked about their experience in the SDNG to include training, opportunities, challenges, and why they joined the National Guard,” said Trygstad.

The delegation next traveled to Watertown where they met with Soldiers from the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion and Company A, 139th BSB. The 1-147th had a number of their female Soldiers attend the visit where they spoke about the transition of female Soldiers into the battalion and recently into one of their batteries.

By the end of the visit, Trygstad said the Women in Leadership exchange provided an opportunity for female Soldiers from the SDNG and Suriname military to work with foreign partners, share their experiences and gain a better understanding of each other’s culture.

“It was truly an honor to host the four Suriname soldiers,” said Trygstad. “I hope to continue to be part of this exchange and encourage other service members within the South Dakota National Guard to do the same.”

For the past 10 years, the SDNG and SDF have successfully partnered together to establish a security cooperation relationship in coordination with USSOUTHCOM under the National Guard Bureau’s State Partnership Program. The partnership has flourished during the past decade becoming a model for mutual security cooperation.

Since 2006, Soldiers from both countries have conducted over 100 subject matter exchanges through the program, which have benefitted men and women from both organizations to gain knowledge and experience in both military operations and civilian culture.

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170304-Z-ZZ999-0001 – From left: Maj. Grot, Capt. Grebbe, Capt. Wamenie, and Capt. Ponit, women officers from the Suriname Defense Force, meet with Capt. Shannon Davis, center, F-16 pilot with the 114th Fighter Wing, South Dakota Air National Guard, during a Women in Leadership exchange as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program, in Sioux Falls, S.D., March 4, 2017. (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



170304-Z-ZZ999-0002 – Women from the Suriname Defense Force pose for a photo with female Soldiers from the 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, during a Women in Leadership exchange as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program, in Brookings, S.D., March 4, 2017. (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



170304-Z-ZZ999-0003 – Women from the Suriname Defense Force pose for a photo with Soldiers from the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, during a Women in Leadership exchange as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program, in Watertown, S.D., March 4, 2017. (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



170304-Z-ZZ999-0004 – U.S. Army Sgt. First Class Chad Brandsrud speaks with women from the Suriname Defense Force about the logistics support Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, provides on the battlefield during a Women in Leadership exchange as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program, in Watertown, S.D., March 4, 2017. (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



170304-Z-ZZ999-0005 – Women from the Suriname Defense Force receive a briefing on maintenance services at the South Dakota Army National Guard's Unit Training and Equipment Site to gain a better understanding of the maintenance level provided to units and their equipment during a Women in Leadership exchange as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program, in Sioux Falls, S.D., March 4, 2017. (U.S. Army National Guard photo)

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